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SEMI-ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT

Richard Smith Beal

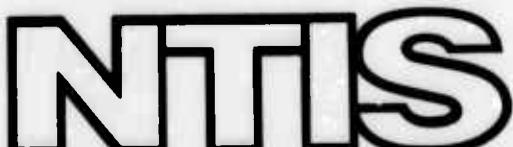
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Semi-Annual Technical Report (TR&A Technical Paper No. 14) is a brief summary paper of TR&A Technical Papers Nos. 11-13. The purpose of this synoptic view of these three technical papers is to provide potential users of the substantive research produced by the Threat Recognition and Analysis Project (Dr. Charles McClelland, principal investigator) with a single manuscript reviewing and referencing the substantive theoretical and empirical papers of the project.

TR&A Technical Paper No. 14 first reviews "Social Psychological Threat Research: A Review and Assessment" by George Ramsey (TR&A Technical Paper No. 11). Ramsey's paper identifies the work of social-psychologists on threats and threat recognition, and assesses the potential contribution these studies may have to the work of TR&A. The second paper abstracted, "Threat Situations: A Search for a Controlled Definition" by Charles A. McClelland, is a theoretical statement of the need for a new, expanded definition of threat. Essentially the paper covers McClelland's suggestion of a "controlled" definition of situational threats helpful to further research efforts in threat evaluation. The final paper by Wayne Martin, entitled "International Commitment and the Linkage to Threat: An Indicators and Measurement Approach," demonstrates the utility of an expanded definition of the threat construct in analyzing international commitments.

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TR&A Technical Paper No. 14

Semi-Annual Technical Report
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March, 1974

Taking inventory of the available literature containing theoretical and research materials on the topic of threat bears some resemblance to the task of processing low-grade ore. Much has been written on threat but the content is widely scattered. Data appear in unexpected places. For example, there is some worthy theoretical writing on the effects of threat in the cross-disciplinary literature of disaster research. The field of ethology presents a large and interesting body of descriptions of the workings of threat on the protective systems of animal communities as they defend territory and raise alarms against the advance of predators. Another source of threat and warning information exists in the field of safety engineering. The largest and most relevant literature on threat is to be found in studies of national security affairs and in the concentration of writing on problems of nuclear defense and deterrence.

Bibliographic searching and concept inventories have been underway since September 1973 in the Threat Recognition and Analysis research project and a survey paper has been written to cover the sector of defense and deterrence theorizing. That paper has been reviewed by the TR&A staff and a decision has been reached to delay its issuance as a technical report of the project until some revisions and extensions are made to meet some problems that were underestimated from the outset. The problems are mainly those of linkage between the early pioneering writing that established the fundamentals of deterrence theory and the current practices of threat estimation and assessment. The development has fused a number of stages and has elaborated a variety of analytic procedures. A very scanty literature traces these matters;

of TR&A, has contributed an additional paper on threat processes which (1) assesses the role of threat as an analytic precept in international relations research, and (2) seeks to provide a "controlled" definition of threat. In his paper (TR&A Technical Paper #12), McClelland promotes the notion that threat has not played a central theoretical and/or empirical role in guiding research in international relations. Furthermore, what scant research has been done employing the concept (that is outside of the military context) relies heavily on a common sense understanding of the term. The result of this practice has been to include many forms of international interaction into an "undifferentiated class" of threat behavior. Generally such conglomerations do much to impede the progress of meaningful research, and therefore McClelland proposes several conceptual distinctions worthy of incorporating into a more analytically useful concept of threat.

The purpose of a "controlled" definition of threat is to give the concept differentiating power, -- that is the ability to segregate threat processes from other forms of international behavior. To do this, McClelland highlights the differences between "issued" and "situational" threats. The former type refers to "threats issued by a party and directed to another party" while the latter is seen as a state of a system ("state of affairs") which is threatening. (McClelland, 1974; 5) After making this distinction, McClelland spends the balance of his treatment on situational threats because issued threats have received considerable attention, especially in the military deterrence literature and the experimental research by social psychologists, while situational threats remain largely unexplored.

A situational threat has essentially two dimensions (1) a subjective, prevision aspect, and (2) an objective reality. The subjective side of a situational threat obviously refers to the perceptions of individuals toward the threat. It is a question of how man views a threat which is independent of the actual characteristics of the threat. The second dimension of a situational threat is its actuality, -- what it is independent

of how it is perceived. For example a dam threatening to collapse under the weight of the water pressing against it has structural weaknesses whose reality are independent of the town's people who "know" the dam will hold and refuse to vacate the area.

Having made these distinctions, McClelland addresses himself to the question of how, from an empirical, analytical point of view, to recognize a situational threat in a complex, dynamic system like the international system. The answer McClelland proposes is an analytic framework which monitors the dynamic, step-changes of a situational threat as it moves through time from one state of "undesirability" to another. In this context, McClelland gives special attention to the concept of ruin and a situational threat's procession to that state, -- which is the state of collapse.

What is important about TR&A Technical Papers #11-12 is their respective contribution to the argument that: (1) threat has been underemployed as a concept in international relations research; (2) when it has served to guide research its meaning was either too rough and undifferentiated to make meaningful distinctions on the one hand, or too narrowly defined, e.g. the military definition, to have a more generalizable significance, and (3) threat could be elevated to a more important status in international research by ascribing to it an expanded, though "controlled," definition. An additional paper is now available which follows the lead of TR&A Technical Papers #11-12 and attempts to ground empirically some of the notions expressed in these Technical Papers.

TR&A Technical Paper 13, entitled "International Commitment and the Linkage to Threat: An Indicators and Measurement Approach," by Wayne Martin, is an attempt to operationalize the concept of international commitment, develop a preliminary model of commitment, conduct some preliminary tests of commitment data, and make the linkage between commitment behavior and situational threats. Professor Martin's paper

demonstrates that quantitative measures can be established to measure the international commitments of nation-states and that by identifying these commitments the structures of future situational threats can be discerned.

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